

NHH



# Working successfully across cultures: challenges and tips

Annelise Ly, Associate professor, NHH



# Aims of this presentation

- Illustrate how cultural differences affect the way we behave and expect others to behave
- Help you reflect on how you can navigate these differences in behaviours and expectations in leader and mentor/tee relationships



# What challenges have you experienced when working across cultures?

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# Challenges when working in multicultural teams

89% of respondents worked in global teams

58% said their team leaders were not adequately prepared

22% received team training/intercultural training



# Main obstacles of working across cultures

88% reported challenges working across time zones

86% reported difficulty in communication

86% reported problems in managing or solving conflicts

86% reported difficulties in building relationships

80% reported difficulties in understanding different accents of team members

76% reported concerns about lack of participation from all team colleagues

A very very short  
introduction to culture...

The iceberg model of culture

- Language
- Food
- Traditional clothing
- Meaning of body language
- Rules for social interaction
- Decision-making process
- Relation to status
- Notions of leadership





*“In Asia, when you make a plan and people say yes, it still does not mean that we are going to do it. There are different “yes” answers for different aspects of plans and actions”*

(Norwegian employee)

*”In China I try to ask questions that cannot be answered with yes or no. Instead of asking: Have you done it? I ask: What have you done? Yes/no questions are usually answered with yes.”*

(Norwegian employee)



So what have you done to work successfully across cultures?

# Leadership across cultures

What is a good leader to you?  
What is a good employee?



The law of Jante/  
*Janteloven*

*Don't think you are anything  
special  
Don't think you are as good  
as we are*

Egalitarian

Norwegian culture

Gender equality

Individualistic and  
independent



# Norwegian leadership

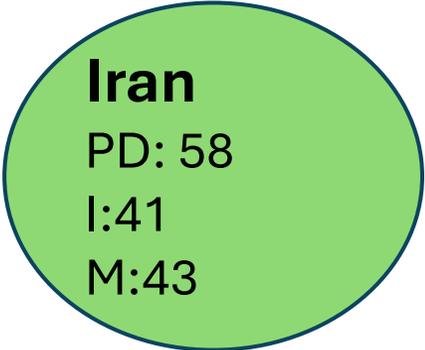
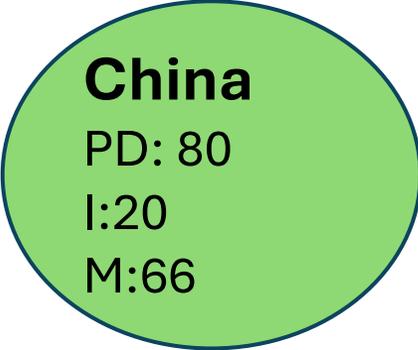
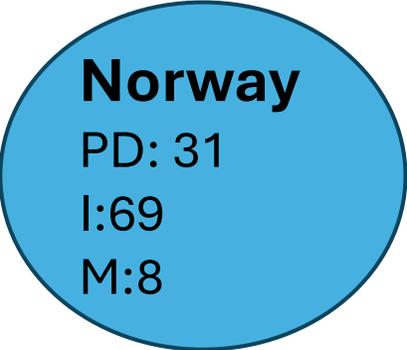
Small distance between leaders and followers

Active involvement of the followers

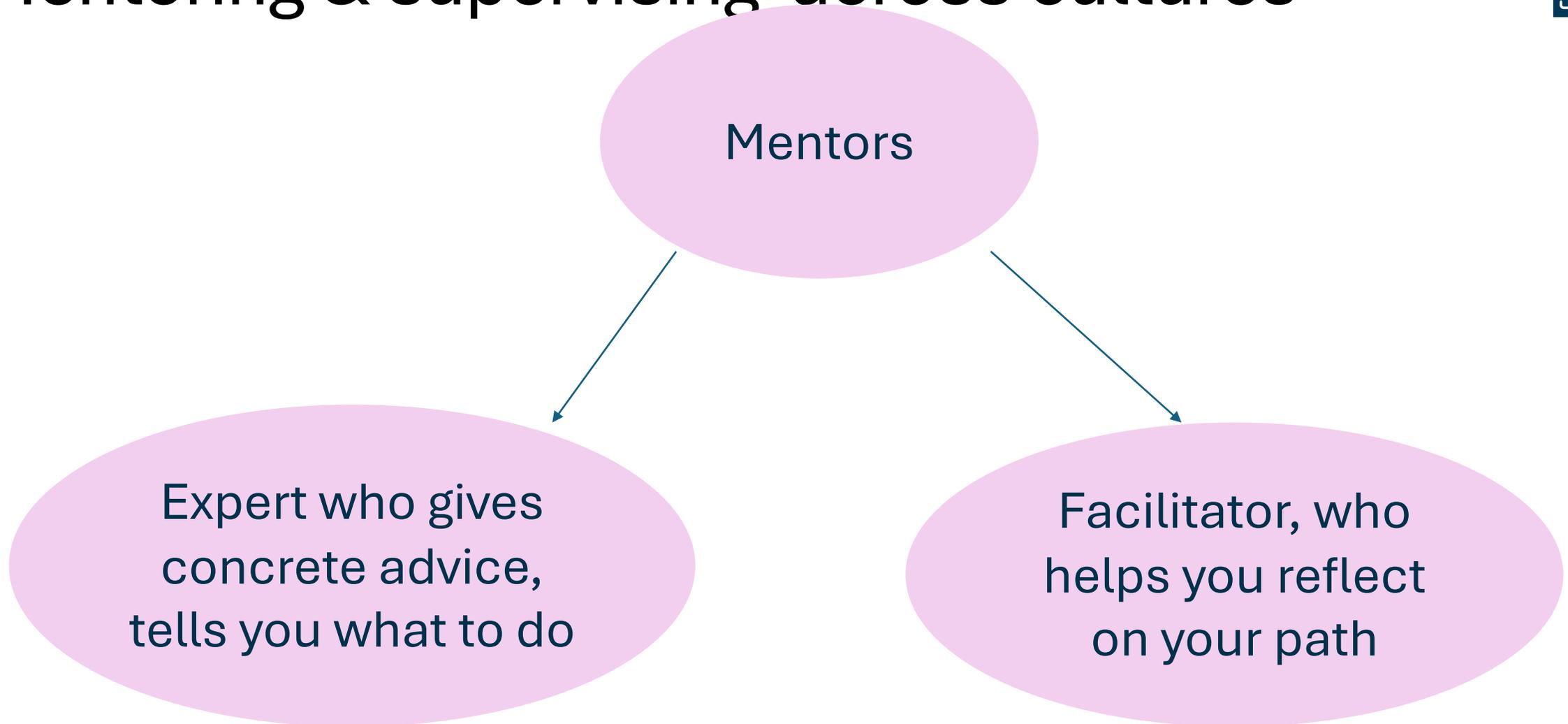
Few explicit guidelines

Feeling of community

Sund & Lines (2016) *Implicit theories of Norwegian leadership*



# Mentoring & supervising across cultures





# Key takeaways

- 1) Be aware of your own culture: what you take for granted is often culturally bounded
- 2) Know about the «other»'s culture & expectations
- 3) Meta-communication- clarify roles and expectations and establish a common reality

Questions or comments?

[Annelise.Ly@nhh.no](mailto:Annelise.Ly@nhh.no)

Or on LinkedIn: Annelise Ly